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BAUCUS CALLS FOR SHARPER FOCUS TO FIGHT TERROR FINANCING

*Finance Chairman seeks measurable progress in stopping flow of terror dollars,
considers additional uses of financial intelligence tools*

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today called on Office of Terrorism and Financial Intelligence (TFI) Undersecretary Stuart Levey to explain why his agency has stopped reporting details of terrorist funds seized, to tell the Committee how well other countries are cooperating with U.S. terror financing investigations, and to discuss financial intelligence tools used to detect suspicious activity. Created four years ago, TFI is charged with stemming the flow of funds to terrorists. The agency has the power to freeze terrorist assets, and it plays a key role in enforcing economic sanctions and investigating money laundering.

“Without terrorism financing, there is no terrorism. They would be unable to do harm to Americans or our allies around the world. TFI is the goalie in our fight to prevent money from getting into the hands of would-be terrorists. You must not let a shot get through,” said Baucus. **“You are doing a good job, and we’re here to support your effort. The Administration considers this to be a high priority, but you must convince them that snuffing out terrorism financing should be an even higher priority.”**

Baucus’s exchanges with Levey also addressed the role of alternative financial institutions and investment banks as possible conduits for terror financing, as well as new technologies like stored value cards – pre-paid cards that allow people to move money across borders without physical cash or direct use of the banking system. Undersecretary Levey responded that TFI does have the authority to investigate all financial institutions, banks and non-banks. Levey also said that the agency is working to deal with the necessary balance between legal use of consumer-friendly innovations, such as stored value cards, and illegal use of these inventions.

Baucus also questioned whether the Suspicious Activity Reports (SAR) issued by TFI might also aid the government in tackling other issues, such as offshore tax evasion, a Baucus priority.

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